



FEMA

Relocated Road Prevents Washouts, Promotes Safety

Oxford County, ME - One of Maine's most pristine rivers, the Saco River, runs through the bucolic region of southwestern Maine. Bisected by the Saco River is the small Maine village of Hiram. Here, alongside the Saco runs River Road and its long history of flooding.

The town had received Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant funds in the past to help prevent future flood damages to the road. But the section of the road that had been mitigated lies at a sharp bend in the river, and the scour effect on the river bank had placed the entire road in jeopardy. The chronic problem of road washouts had a negative effect on neighbors, schools, businesses, municipal, and utility services; it divided the town into two, causing a major inconvenience and potential safety hazard.

The town decided to fix the problem once and for all. In order to do so, the town wanted to move part of the road back from the riverbank. However, the first major issue would be the costs associated with the project. Historically a farming center, today it is a bedroom community of Portland. The town of 1,406 residents has neither industry nor lakefront property, leaving the town with a very limited tax base.

The second issue was that the location that the town hoped to move the road to was private property. Fortunately, the property owner was civic minded and donated an easement to the town at no cost. This opened the door for the town to apply for another grant through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

The town applied for an HMGP grant through a flooding disaster (DR-1371-ME) declared on May 16, 2001. In April 2002, the town was awarded a grant to fund the moving of the road and the stabilization of the river bank. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides grants to states, Indian tribes, and local governments for long-term hazard mitigation projects following a major disaster declaration. Under this program FEMA pays up to 75 percent of the project cost. Either the state or the applicant covers the remaining 25 percent.

The project consisted of moving 1,825 feet of road approximately 20 feet west of the river. This improvement altered the angle of the slope to a 2:1 ratio and protected the slope with rip-rap and native vegetation. An added benefit was that the town also was able to remove a sharp curve and a knoll and fill a dip in the road.

The total cost of the project was \$538,000 of which the town paid the total local share of \$134,000. The direct cost benefit to the town is \$755,610 in mitigated financial loss.

As of February 2009, the project is 100 percent complete, and Hiram town officials report that River Road has had no more flooding problems.



Oxford County,
Maine



Quick Facts

Year:

2001

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$538,000.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Flood Control

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)